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WEST INDIA QUESTION.

THE

OUTLINE OF A PLAN

FOR THE

TOTAL, IMMEDIATE, AND SAFE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

THROUGHOUT THE

British Colonies.

By JOSEPH PHILLIPS,

LATE OF ANTIGUA.

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INTRODUCTION.

AT a moment when the deeply interesting and momentous question of Negro Emancipation commands the attention of every class of the community, and engages the consideration of His Majesty's Government, and the Representatives of the Nation, I have thought that I might render some small service to the sacred cause to which my heart and life are devoted, by presenting in the form of a plan for the Abolition of Slavery, the result of upwards of twenty-seven years' experience and close observation in one of His Majesty's Slave dependencies. I trust it will be found a simple, practicable, economical and efficient remedy for the great evil it seeks to destroy; alike beneficial to the Negro, the Master, and the Colonies—self-corrective and SAFE in its operation, and, by a righteous adjustment of private interests, SATISFACTORY to all whose claims are consistent with justice and truth.

Indemnity for injuries sustained by emancipation, and assistance to such as shall exhibit the spirit of honourable enterprise will be found to be embodied in the present plan, while, on the other hand, no exorbitant or unjust demand will be conceded to those who might be inclined to take advantage of a nation's humanity and liberality.

It has been further sought to make the Whites the efficient agents in the promotion of the system of free labour, by closely identifying their personal and pecuniary interests with the welfare and civilization of the liberated Slaves.

Whatever expense might be occasioned during the first years of emancipation under this plan, would be abundantly repaid by a reduction in the public expenditure, the annihilation of the present tremendous cost of Slavery, and the prosperity and growing wealth of the Colonies, creating a demand for the manufactures of this country very far exceeding our present exports.

It is admitted by the West Indians that their properties are next to valueless, and can with difficulty find customers in the market at any price; it is also demonstrable by the clearest evidence, that the depre-

ciation deplored, is attributable to the operations of the system, but by the adoption of this or a similar plan which would effect Immediate Emancipation, millions of Capital might be safely and advantageously invested in West India Property, every shilling of which, would prove alike beneficial to the Negroes, the Colonies, and all our home Commercial and Shipping interests.

As the observations upon the following plan have been necessarily brief, I am aware that there will yet remain many particulars requiring further elucidation, and it will afford me great pleasure, by personal interview, to remove any difficulty from the minds of those who are, like myself, desirous of seeing the long agitated question of Negro Slavery finally determined.

JOSEPH PHILLIPS.

18, *Addle Street, Wood Street,*
London, May 30th 1833.

OUTLINE OF A PLAN, &c.

I.—THAT, by an act of the Imperial Parliament, FREEDOM shall be conferred on all the Slaves throughout His Majesty's dominions on and after the First of July 1834, and that the following regulations be enforced, as necessary and sufficient to secure the welfare of the Slave, and the cultivation of the soil:—

1st. Corporal punishments to be entirely abolished, and the liberated Slave admitted to an equal participation of all the Civil and Religious privileges enjoyed by the free-born subject of these realms.

2nd. Such of the Slaves as have been hitherto engaged in agricultural labours to be indented to their present masters for the term of one year, being previously duly registered, and provision made for the payment of adequate remuneration. At the end of the first year, it shall be left to the free choice of the labourer either to be indented to the same master, or choose another for a similar period.

3rd. That, to prevent idleness and vagrancy, the magistrates shall have the power to compel all persons found unemployed in towns or elsewhere, (who have no obvious mode of living except by manual labour) to engage themselves as agricultural labourers or otherwise, or, on refusal to do so, to send them to the public works.

4th. That the hours of labour shall be from six in the morning to six in the evening, with an interval of three hours for meals. All agreements between employer and labourer for a specified term to be understood to have relation to the above general regulation, and all labour beyond to be considered extra work, and paid for accordingly.

OBSERVATIONS

EXPLANATORY OF THE ABOVE PROPOSED REGULATIONS.

1st. The 1st of July 1834 is named as the time for proclaiming the FREEDOM of the SLAVE, in order that the plan may commence its operation at a period best adapted to facilitate its success, and secure the interests and convenience of the proprietor. Ample opportunity will, (generally speaking) by this arrangement, be afforded for clearing off the crops of sugar. Another obvious advantage connected with this part of the plan would be, that while a definite period would be fixed for the termination of Slavery, sufficient interval would elapse for such subsidiary enactments, and official appointments, as might be necessary for the full and effectual working of the new system.

2nd. As the degrading practice of inflicting corporal punishments would at once retard the progress of civilization, and perpetuate one of the worst evils of the slave system, it is proposed entirely to abolish it, and to substitute the responsible authority of the magistrate; limiting the exercise of his power to punishment at the tread mill, or a sentence to labour for the benefit of the community at the public works of the Colony. Violations of Law of a higher description than a breach of contract between master and servant, &c., to be adjudicated and punished by trial at Sessions, Assizes, &c.

Plantations is by no means equalized. Whilst many are overstocked, and a portion hired out as task gangs, others are compelled to obtain extra labour at an extravagant rate. This great inconvenience and gross anomaly, in an agricultural country, would, in two or three years be got rid of by the adoption of the present plan.

7th. The limitation of a day's-work must be regulated by circumstances, which are unavoidable in Crop time on a Sugar plantation. The multifarious operations in manufacturing the produce cannot be brought under fixed regulations, but must be left to be mutually arranged between master and labourer. As, however, the duration of an ordinary day is specified, there will be little difficulty in settling the rate at which extra labour is to be paid.

8th. Wages in money will be decidedly preferable to a system of truck or barter. In the latter, would originate innumerable contentions—the stimulus to labour would be greatly impaired, whilst the Planter would be converted into a petty huckster. The amount of wages generally might be as follows: viz. to an able-bodied field-labouring man, say one Shilling sterling per diem. To a woman so engaged, nine-pence; and to youth of both sexes six-pence. Such a rate with the extra wages they would obtain at particular seasons, and the produce of their hired grounds, would enable the adults to support their infant children and infirm parents, independent of any aid from their masters, or any local institution.

9th. To advance the welfare of the labourer, to promote the public peace, and to maintain the orderly and industrious habits of the labouring population, it is highly desirable, that in all cases, the servant should be required to rent a portion of land and cultivate the same;—and, as such portions of land would in the great majority of instances be rented of the employer, the master would thereby be relieved to a considerable extent.

10th. It would be further desirable, that the Planter should leave the raising of provisions, and the breeding of every species of stock to his labourers, as this would give employment to the young, the aged and the infirm, who, without such means of profitable industry, would be a burden to the Planters. Besides the raising of stock and provisions; such persons might advantageously direct their attention to the manufacturing of various vegetable oils, viz. Cocoa-nutt, Castor, Ben, Physic, and Nutt, these would constitute a branch of Colonial produce, at once beneficial to the dependencies, and the parent country.

11th. As there is now a disproportion in the population of our Colonies, encouragement should be offered for emigration to such as more especially require cultivation. It ought, therefore, to be provided, that grants of land should be made to all willing to engage in agricultural pursuits:—the grant, nevertheless, not becoming absolute, unless the land so granted be brought into cultivation, to the extent of two-thirds within the period of three years.

12th. Emigrants for employment from the Continent of America and the Foreign Colonies, desirous of living under the British Government, to be subject to the same regulations as the resident inhabitants of similar rank and condition.

13th. There is at the present time upon an average eighty acres of land to each existing inhabitant of our Slave dependencies; consequently, no apprehension need be cherished of too large an influx of labourers, since industry and enterprise alone are wanting to increase the wealth and prosperity of the Colonies to an unlimited extent.

14th. The military force requisite to preserve the peace of Colonial Society having reference to the present oppressive Slave

System, will be more than adequate to the maintenance of good order under the improved state of society, effected by the free labour system.

15th. An additional constabulary force (free of expense,) selected from amongst the best disposed individuals on the plantation, (persons well recommended by resident ministers and employers,) would be of more service than the army and militia, especially, if places of small emolument were given as rewards for good behaviour.

16th. Commissioners should be appointed to visit the plantations and explain to the Slaves the foregoing conditions of their emancipation, leaving with them printed statements of the same, with the names and addresses of the district protectors and magistrates, to whom masters and servants would appeal for the redress of grievances.

II.—FINANCIAL REGULATIONS.

1st. That Commissioners shall be empowered to make advances of Cash to such masters of agricultural labourers, as may be unable at the commencement of free-labour to pay wages—such loans to be re-paid out of the proceeds of each succeeding crop.

2nd. That where proprietors of Estates shall be desirous of introducing Steam engines and other machinery, but are destitute of the means, the Commissioners shall make such advances upon

moderate Interest, as shall upon due examination be found to be indispensable for the accomplishment of the object, the amount to be re-paid by such instalments, and at such periods as His Majesty's Commissioners shall appoint.

3rd. Planters on fully proving by proper documents and witnesses on oath before His Majesty's Commissioners, that their properties have diminished in income, in consequence of emancipation, shall be entitled to claim, and shall receive such amount; provided always, that it doth not appear that the party so claiming indemnity, hath directly or indirectly contributed by the neglect of the proper means of cultivation, or by exciting his labourers to insubordination, to the deterioration in value of such property. That this part of the plan remain in force for ten years, each application, however, having reference only to the preceding year. His Majesty's Commissioners should by this provision be further empowered to claim and enforce the re-payment with Interest of the sum advanced, if it can be by them fully established that during any part of the aforesaid ten years, the property has increased in value above the income derived during the year preceding emancipation.

4th. Proprietors of domestic and mechanical Slaves and of jobbing gangs to receive their value in land in any British Colony they may prefer—such lands to be transferable with per cent. in money, to enable them to cultivate the same, should such assistance be required; but should the total value of such Slaves not exceed £150 sterling, the amount to be paid in money.

5th. The value of any species of property depends on the amount of income it produces. An estate in Jamaica produces say 1000*l.* per annum clear, therefore, its worth, olalwing interest at 4 per cent, is 25,000*l.*, including the Slaves kept thereon. The flesh and bones of these Slaves are worth nothing; it is their *labour* alone that is of value. If we liberate these Slaves, their

labour is nevertheless *retained.* The only variation caused by their liberation is, that instead of giving *food and clothing* for their labour, we give them *money* in the shape of wages. Admitting that the amount of such wages would be somewhat more than the value of the food and clothing, the additional comforts derivable by the Slaves from the surplus difference, would enable him to perform more work in any given time than before, it being an acknowledged fact, that free men will do more work than Slaves; and thus the Planters would receive an ample return for the extra outlay—What then is the result? Why evidently this; the estate producing the same income as it did prior to the liberation of the Slaves; the value of the latter becomes transferred to the former, and receiving 1000*l.* per annum now as he then did, no injury whatever is sustained——he has only to set down his *Estate* at 25,000*l.* instead of his *Estate and Slaves.*

6th. This plan if minutely and candidly examined will be found to meet every reasonable objection that can be urged by the Mortgagee, Legatee, or any other claimant.

W. Johnston, Printer, 120, Fenchurch Street.

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